**Sustainable Story: From Dutch Wool and Seaweed**

*The Power of Local, The Impact on an Industrial Scale*

Grains of sand between your toes, the salty scent of the sea in the air, and white foam atop the waves—the Dutch west coast is not only where designer Nienke Hoogvliet grew up, but also one of her greatest sources of inspiration. This was already evident in the design SEA ME, which she presented ten years ago at Dutch Design Week. The design—a rug made of seaweed yarn, hand-knotted in an old fishing net—symbolizes a stark contrast: the plastic pollution in the ocean versus the wonders that lie beneath our waters.

But water pollution extends beyond just our oceans. About 20% of the world's freshwater pollution is caused by textile dyeing and processing. This often impacts the drinking water of marginalized groups in vulnerable areas. Moreover, the chemicals in synthetic dyes are harmful to the people who work with them daily.

Seaweed Dye

An eco-friendly dye made from natural materials could bring about significant change for both people and the environment, as well as for the textile industry as a whole. Seaweed can rightfully be called a miracle resource. Fascinated by its versatile properties, Nienke Hoogvliet has been researching the potential of seaweed as a natural and eco-friendly material for industrial use since 2012. Seaweed not only purifies air and water, but it also grows rapidly—up to 30 centimeters a day—without needing freshwater, farmland, or pesticides. This makes it not only a natural material with diverse properties but also a sustainable one. Just as versatile as seaweed is as a resource, it is also diverse in the colors it can produce: from grey and sand to brown, green, and orange.

And we can harvest it right here in the Netherlands.

While seaweed is gaining recognition for its use, many of its byproducts remain untapped. This is unfortunate because these byproducts could serve as valuable materials for sustainable alternatives in industries where they are sorely needed.

Zeefier

In 2020, Nienke Hoogvliet co-founded the company Zeefier with Anne Boermans to produce seaweed-based dyes and use seaweed waste streams as an eco-friendly alternative to chemical dyes. What began for Nienke as a personal experiment with a single jar of handmade natural dye has grown into a pioneering company led by four women, with an ambitious mission: to make seaweed-based dyes reproducible and available on an industrial scale. Always locally sourced, making maximum use of waste streams, and always in harmony with nature. This means using only what is needed, respecting the natural ecosystem, and sourcing directly from local farmers. Zeefier aims to prove not only that this approach must happen but that it can.

They are not alone in this vision. Further inland, Zeefier found a like-minded partner in Reina Ovinge of The Knitwit Stable, a knowledge center and small-scale production facility in Baambrugge. The Knitwit Stable has the ambition to revive the enormous potential of Dutch wool. While seaweed is a rich but underused resource from the sea, wool is its counterpart on land. Despite the excellent qualities of wool—such as insulation, recyclability, biodegradability, antibacterial properties, and fire resistance—the wool from over 800,000 sheep in the Netherlands is largely unused each year. There is no market for it, and in the worst cases, it ends up in landfills.

Zeefier x The Knitwit Stable

The Knitwit Stable’s mission is to produce honest wool (textile) products with respect for nature and community, seamlessly blending craftsmanship, tradition, and sustainability.

Driven by a shared vision of reviving the hidden potential of local resources and local production, The Knitwit Stable and Zeefier joined forces to combat the polluting textile industry. Their first collaborative project, the carpet \*From Dutch Wool and Seaweed\*, symbolizes what is possible when innovation and respect for people, animals, and oceans come together.

Both Zeefier and The Knitwit Stable believe that sustainable production starts with local resources and maintaining the right balance between nature and human intervention. For \*From Dutch Wool and Seaweed\*, Zeefier and The Knitwit Stable use seaweed from the North Sea and wool from Limburg’s Kempen heath sheep. The use of waste streams, such as leftover seaweed, and the appreciation of local production, like the processing of Dutch wool, demonstrate their shared commitment to minimizing waste and maximizing the use of what is already available.

Impact on a Large Scale

Although their core values are rooted in local production, Zeefier and The Knitwit Stable aim for industrial-scale impact. Only by offering large-scale solutions can the positive impact of their products spread further. This makes their mission ambitious, but perhaps even more crucial in a world where sustainability is no longer a choice but a necessity.

Sustainable as a Whole

Together, The Knitwit Stable and Zeefier represent more than just products; they embody a new vision. A vision in which every carpet, made from Dutch wool and dyed with seaweed-based dyes, symbolizes what is possible when innovation, local resources, and sustainability meet. The industrial \*From Dutch Wool and Seaweed\* carpet is machine-tufted by the Dutch company Best Wool. For those who prefer one-of-a-kind pieces, there’s a handmade version tufted in the social workplace Millenerpoort. These collaborations demonstrate that locally produced and socially responsible products can not only fill a high-end niche but also be commercially viable, scalable, and fully traceable.

With respect for nature, the local, and the future, The Knitwit Stable and Zeefier show that the choices we make today can make a world of difference tomorrow. In the subtle color gradient of the woolen pile dyed with seaweed, \*From Dutch Wool and Seaweed\* pays homage to a world where people, animals, and oceans collaborate organically and respectfully. This high-quality carpet brings together the richness of local natural resources in the Netherlands, from land to sea.